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tentatively as a group settled on a determined territory, having its principal source of livelihood in a cultivation of the soil that is based on the system of the small farm, and possessing its own way of life and its own indigenous culture. 565 829 [181]

This definition will help us answer our second question; namely, what are the differences between the peasants and the farmers. For a long time the rural sociologists of the West made no distinction between these two groups, and it is only recently that adequate attention has been given to this problem. Today it is generally recognized that between these two rural societies there exist essential dissimilarities which result from a permanent infiltration by the cosmopolitan civilization into the rural orbit. This process has been far more intense in the European and American rural groups, the farmers, than in the genuine peasant population. 565 182

With this distinction in mind, the farmers and the genuine peasantry may be contrasted. Economically speaking, the farmers produce primarily for the market, abiding by the established norms of offer and demand. Although they are attached to the land, they consider it almost impersonally and from an economic point of view. Therefore, they are willing to move from one area to another when there are economic reasons. The peasants, on the other hand, produce primarily for home consumption. Because their land is a part of their heritage, they consider it personally, as a part of their life and of their family tradition.

Socially, life in the rural communities of the West has become increasingly urbanized. The peasant society of Eastern Europe has been infiltrated by urban ideas to a far lesser degree and has preserved, generally speaking, many of its original aspects.

Culturally, the indigenous traditions of the farmer population, if not completely vanished, are disappearing rapidly. In the genuine peasant society, cultural traits are still clearly

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565 visible and constitute an outstanding characteristic of this
182 group.

The third point in this discussion of the peasantry concerns the special characteristics of the Eastern European peasantry which have enabled it to maintain a separate political organization. It can be said safely that nowhere in Europe have the characteristics peculiar to peasant society been so well preserved as in this region. Although numerical supremacy has been a factor in the preservation of peasant society, more important is the fact that the peasants of Eastern Europe have manifested in recent history a tremendous self-consciousness, political maturity, and determined will to create political and social organizations of their own, which, so far, have not been emulated by the peasantry in other parts of the globe. The peasantry of Western European countries, such as Spain, Portugal, or Italy, often comprises over 50 per cent of the rural population. However, this Western peasantry has never been able to generate powerful and influential peasant political organizations, nor has it been able to play an outstanding role in national life as has the peasantry of Eastern Europe.

II

566 The greater part of the peasantry in Eastern Europe was liberated from the bondages of serfdom in the year of revolutions, 1848. In that part of Poland which was included in the Russian Empire, the abolition of serfdom was proclaimed in 1861, and in Old Rumania, in 1864. The peasants of the Balkans, subjected to a special type of land tenure relations and vassalage as practiced in the Ottoman empire, were freed gradually with the withdrawal of the Turkish political power, especially after the arrangements made at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.

000 The liberation of the peasantry was a consequence of

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175 inforced in its effect by the extreme splintering of national,
162 linguistic, and religious affiliations. A good map of the na-
433 tionalities, languages, and religions of Eastern Europe would have shown not the large patches of relatively homogeneous populations which are found in so much of Western Europe but rather a polka-dot pattern of intermixed minorities.

182 The relative national uniformity of the West is perhaps, at least in part, the product of a history rich in the processes of successful social learning and acculturation, which merged and melted the different ethnic groups that were left in the Western countries by accidents of migration, wars, and settlement. In Eastern Europe, such accidents of conquest or settlement may well have been even more numerous, but there is also some reason to think that the processes of assimilation were much slower and less effective.

Greater uniformity of language and culture means greater interchangeability of social roles. This is not merely a contributing cause to the growth in social mobility and in the interchange of social roles but is also to some extent their product. Where societies are rigorously stratified, where religions fail to impress upon people an awareness of their essential unity, where the obstacles to a change in occupation or in social role are great, and the rewards for mobility are uncertain and small—in these societies individuals may best succeed in gaining security by clinging tenaciously to their familiar groups, languages, customs, and traditions, and by rejecting any assimilation to other groups except the most privileged as a threat to their existence. The more privileged groups, under these conditions, can only be expected to resent and resist the assimilation or intrusion of strangers, unless these strangers come from regions of clearly greater wealth and greater prestige and seem to bring to the new group assets clearly greater than those they would demand. The lack of unity and assimilation in language and culture in Eastern Europe thus appears as one more aspect of the

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relative lack in fundamental economic innovation and social learning in that geographic area, if we take the extent of such learning and innovation in the Western countries as our standard.

On this view, the Western way of life—thus far the way of life of a minority of mankind—has been built upon a certain fundamental willingness to learn, and a basic acceptance of both some mobility, at least in society, and of some innovations in accustomed practices and habits. Against the background of this Western culture, large-scale markets and economic competition, as well as the impact of the modern centralized state, had a chance of functioning as accelerators of technological and social change: they tended to lure or push people away from social roles or economic occupations which were poorly rewarded and into new roles or occupations where the gains were greater. Western economic and political institutions succeeded the better in this function of accelerating social change where they impinged upon individuals who had the economic and social resources for moving, and at least a minimum of cultural and psychological willingness to do so. Where these economic and cultural preconditions did not exist, however, or where they existed only in part, the effect of the impact of Western institutions was bound to be quite different, and these differences became dramatically visible in the area of Eastern Europe.

III

Eastern Europe, seen from this aspect, was a semi-Western area. It was fully exposed to Western practices and institutions both in the field of higher education, particularly university education, and in the fields of military drill and warfare, and particularly in the use of conscripted armies, although it could operate in this field only as long as no extensive industrial facilities for the use of massed artillery